UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-SEVENTH SESSION

Official Records

FIFTH COMMITTEE
39th meeting
held on
Wednesday, 9 December 1992
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 39th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. DINU (Romania)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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92-58193 6528S (E)

Distr. GENERAL
A/C.5/47/SR.39
18 December 1992

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

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The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 104: PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1992-1993 (continued)

Restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields (A/47/753)

1. Mr. THORNBURGH (Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management), introducing the note by the Secretary-General on the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields (A/47/753), said that the measures announced by the Secretary-General were in keeping with the objectives of the restructuring of the Secretariat, as outlined by the Secretary-General in his foreword to the report submitted to the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council in July 1992 (E/1992/82/Add.1), paragraph 105 of his annual report on the work of the Organization (A/47/1), and his statement to the General Assembly on 2 November 1992 at the opening of the debate on the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. Those objectives were to enhance the Secretariat's capacity to implement effectively the mandates of Member States and to enable the Secretariat to adjust rapidly to new circumstances and tasks.

2. The Secretary-General had, on a number of occasions, emphasized the importance which he attached to the fulfilment of one of the fundamental objectives of the Charter, namely, the development of all countries and the improvement of the living conditions of all peoples. The Secretary-General had also stressed the link between development objectives and policies and actions related to the search for peace.

3. The note by the Secretary-General (A/47/753) described the main features of the three new Departments based on the three clusters of functions announced by the Secretary-General on 2 November 1992. The specific functions and the distribution of responsibilities for the implementation of the various programmes and subprogrammes adopted by the General Assembly, as well as staff and other resources for the three new Departments, would be communicated to the Committee in the final revised budget estimates to be submitted early in 1993. The Secretariat's first proposal to the Committee was, therefore, that the final revised estimates should be considered at the beginning of the second year of the implementation of the current budget. It was imperative for the General Assembly to consider the budgetary and programmatic aspects of the second phase of the restructuring. The revised estimates would include an analysis of the programmatic aspects of and justifications for the restructuring.

4. The Secretariat's second proposal concerned the treatment of the current revised estimates. As the Acting Controller had explained, the Secretariat proposed that the General Assembly should take note of the revised estimates as a whole and postpone its decision on the number and the distribution of high-level posts. He was confident that a satisfactory solution to that

(Mr. Thornburgh)

question could be found through dialogue and cooperation. As indicated by the Secretary-General, the streamlining of the upper echelons of the Secretariat remained a priority objective.

5. Thirdly, the Secretariat proposed that the preparation and consideration of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1994-1995 should take place in 1993. The programme budget must be a true reflection of the programmes adopted by the General Assembly and the structure put in place by the Secretary-General. The Department of Administration and Management would make every effort to reconcile transparency, or the amount and type of information which the Committee required in order to take a decision on the Organization's resources, with simplicity, in other words, the production of a budget document that was easy to read. He expressed appreciation, on behalf of the Secretary-General, for the cooperation shown by the Committee in the difficult, but necessary, process of adjusting the Secretariat to the important tasks which it must assume in order to serve the international community in the best possible manner.

6. Mr. TOMMO MONTHE (Cameroon) said that he welcomed the Secretary-General's decision to initiate a dialogue with Member States on the question of restructuring. Since February 1992, Member States had been inclined to think that what they were hearing from the Secretary-General was a kind of monologue. A balance was being restored between the political and the economic and social sectors of the Organization's activities. It was clear from document A/47/753 that the activities outlined in the Secretary-General's report "An Agenda for Peace" (A/47/277-S/24111) were not the Organization's only priority.

7. With regard to the creation of an additional Department in the economic and social field, his delegation would appreciate clarification from the Secretariat as to how the work of the three new Departments would be coordinated. Current activities would have to be reallocated and a decision would need to be made on the allocation of new activities such as those connected with the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. Mention should be made, in that context, of General Assembly resolution 32/197, which was relevant to the issue of the division of responsibilities between Headquarters and the field.

8. It should be noted that the restructuring was not taking place in a vacuum. A number of decisions had been taken in recent years to which Member States attached great importance, such as those intended to address the critical economic situation of African countries. Restructuring would affect the balance of power among the main organs of the United Nations, as envisaged in the Charter, and would also have implications for the medium-term plan and the programme budget. Those implications should be carefully studied.

9. Mr. CLAVIJO (Colombia) said that he shared many of the views expressed by the previous speaker. With reference to paragraph 14 of document A/47/753, which stated that the new Department for Development Support and Management

(Mr. Clavijo, Colombia)

Services would serve as a focal point for technical cooperation and would also act as an executing agency in such areas as institutional development and human resources development, he said that his delegation had some questions with regard to the second function. During the discussion of the medium-term plan, a number of delegations in both the Second and the Fifth Committees had questioned the advisability of the two functions being performed by a single unit. The Secretary-General had postponed a solution to that issue. His delegation was unclear as to what the new Department was expected to do and what its comparative advantages would be in relation to those of the specialized agencies, the regional commissions and the United Nations Development Programme. With regard to the last sentence of the paragraph, which indicated that the Department's technical cooperation with developing countries would be focused on the requirements of the least developed countries and those of economies in transition, he noted that technical cooperation had traditionally been extended to developing countries within a multilateral framework. If the Secretariat was proposing to give priority to those two groups of countries, that would exceed its competence. While the Secretary-General was entitled to decide on the organization of work within the Secretariat, the definition of the Organization's programmatic priorities was clearly the prerogative of Member States. His delegation wished to know what priority would be given to developing countries which did not fit into the two categories specified.

10. His delegation was also concerned about the proposal in paragraph 24 regarding the redeployment of posts from administrative to substantive areas. There had never, to his knowledge, been any suggestion of a conflict between those two sectors. While his delegation did not object to the principle that the number of posts should be commensurate with the needs of the Organization and that, on occasion, a reduction in the number of posts would be required, it believed that the Department of Administration and Management should undertake a detailed consideration of the distribution at various levels of the posts mentioned in document A/47/753).

11. Mr. RAE (India) said that his delegation shared the views of the previous speakers. In general, India welcomed the restructuring exercise and believed that the proposals set out in document A/47/753 sought to restore a balance between the political and the economic and social sectors of the Organization's activities. With regard to paragraph 23, which indicated that the Secretary-General intended to eliminate four Assistant Secretary-General posts in the Department of Administration and Management, he recalled that, in a statement to the Fifth Committee on personnel questions, the Secretary-General had mentioned the possibility of introducing a career-level equivalent to the Assistant Secretary-General level. It was unclear whether there was any connection between that suggestion and the proposal in paragraph 23, which did not mention the substitution of any posts for those being eliminated.

12. With regard to the proposal in paragraph 24 concerning the redeployment of posts from administrative to substantive areas, his delegation supported

(Mr. Rae, India)

that idea in principle, provided that it did not adversely affect programme delivery in any area. Similar considerations applied to the overall reduction in the number of posts.

13. As to the proposal in paragraph 25 that the revised budget estimates should be considered early in 1993, his delegation noted that the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) was not scheduled to meet in 1993, and pointed out that it would have an important contribution to make to the consideration of the programmatic aspects of the number and the distribution of high-level posts.

14. Mr. IRUMBA (Uganda) agreed with the representative of Cameroon that the opening of a dialogue on restructuring between the Secretary-General and the Member States was a positive development. He welcomed the Secretary-General's proposals, since they served to restore the balance between the political and economic sectors, which had been previously tilted in favour of political issues. He supported the proposal in paragraph 21 of the note by the Secretary-General that the post of Director of the Centre for Human Rights should be upgraded to the level of Assistant Secretary-General, in the light of the increasing emphasis placed on the promotion of human rights. His delegation had previously opposed the downgrading of the post and he hoped that the upgrading would not be merely symbolic and would not be done at the expense of other equally deserving cases.

15. He shared the apprehension expressed by the representative of Colombia concerning the elimination of four Assistant Secretary-General posts in the Department of Administration and Management, which should be the cornerstone of an efficient, well-managed and financially sound Organization. He agreed with the representative of India that clarification was needed as to the Secretary-General's intentions, in particular, whether he planned to replace the Assistant Secretary-General posts with D-3 posts. He pointed out that the workload of the Department had increased in recent years and downgrading the posts in question would not serve its interests, since those concerned needed to have the requisite authority in order to fulfil their functions properly.

16. Consideration should also be given to the programmatic implications of restructuring. In that connection, he shared the concerns expressed by the representative of India concerning the role of CPC in addressing that question in the light of the revised estimates.

17. Mr. INOMATA (Japan), remarking on the fact that the note by the Secretary-General had been circulated under two agenda items, noted that the Committee was responsible for considering the budgetary aspects of the question, but wondered to what extent the General Assembly would be able to address the substantive aspects of restructuring, since no provision had been made for that purpose. Perhaps the Fifth Committee could provide a forum for such discussions.

18. He noted that the changes announced by the Secretary-General were part of

(Mr. Inomata, Japan)

the redeployment process and that the high-level posts which had been reshuffled or created would be accommodated within existing resources. However, it was clear that the establishment of three new departments would involve changes in the number of Under-Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General posts. It would be useful if the Secretary-General could provide an overall view of how those posts were to be allocated.

19. With regard to the question of dialogue between the Secretary-General and the Member States, a pattern seemed to have been established whereby the Secretary-General announced his decisions and then submitted proposed revised estimates to cover those decisions. He wondered to what extent those estimates were genuine proposals, since the action concerned had already been taken. As a result, the Committee was being asked to give its approval after the fact. That procedure was unacceptable and failed to give proper weight to the role of CPC and ACABQ. Redeployment measures should be approved in accordance with the budgetary procedures provided for in the Financial Regulations, particularly in the case of transfers of resources between sections. Unless something was done, restructuring by the Secretary-General would continue on a de facto basis, without proper control.

20. According to paragraph 27 of the note by the Secretary-General, the statements of programme budget implications relating to new or additional activities would be provisional and basically at the maintenance level. It was far from clear what was meant by "provisional". He wondered what precise form the programme budget implications to be submitted by the Secretary-General would take. It seemed that momentous decisions were being taken, particularly in the context of the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, on the basis of provisional budget provisions and that the Committee would not be fulfilling its function of scrutinizing the programme budget implications of all decisions having financial implications.

21. The proposals regarding budgetary procedures set out in paragraphs 26, 27 and 28 appeared plausible, but his delegation was deeply concerned about their validity. For example, he wondered whether the proposal in paragraph 26 (a) that the General Assembly should take note of the current revised estimates was tantamount to giving de facto approval to the redeployment. According to paragraph 26 (b), the Secretary-General would present the final number and distribution of high-level posts financed from the regular budget early in 1993. However, in order to discuss the question, it was necessary to know the current situation regarding the number of high-level posts, taking into account the latest changes.

22. In addition, it was not clear what was meant by the proposal in paragraph 28 to submit the next budget at a later stage in 1993. He wondered what kind of delay would be involved and whether there would be sufficient time for the vital input by CPC and ACABQ. He felt that the proposals regarding the budgetary process set out in paragraphs 25 to 28 needed to be thoroughly discussed by the Advisory Committee, which should be asked to submit its observations and proposals on the question in the near future.

23. Mr. KINCHEN (United Kingdom) said that he supported the Secretary-General's efforts, as chief administrative officer, to make the best possible use of available resources and to focus on substantive activities such as human rights and sustainable development. He also welcomed the link which had been established between those two areas. However, the Secretary-General's initiatives did have technical implications for the budgetary process and his delegation was concerned that the procedures should be properly observed. In that connection, the Advisory Committee had already remarked on the difficulty the Administration faced in implementing a budget whose structure did not correspond to the current structure of the Secretariat. In addition, whatever action was taken by the General Assembly in response to specific proposals by the Secretary-General, the Committee would need to consider and approve the relevant appropriations for 1993 by budgetary section, since those appropriations would provide the basis for determining the assessed contributions of Member States for the coming year. Predictability in that area was an important consideration for his own delegation and for many others. Although assurances had been given during informal consultations, he would like formal confirmation that any revised estimates presented early in 1993 would not increase the financial liability of Member States for that year, but would deal only with the redistribution of resources within the level already approved. He would also welcome confirmation that any additional proposals the Secretariat intended to put forward would respect the budgetary procedures of the Organization, particularly the provisions of resolution 41/213.

24. Mr. SPAANS (Netherlands) welcomed the decisions taken by the Secretary-General in his capacity as chief administrative officer of the Organization. However, he would welcome reassurance that the proposals set out in paragraphs 23 and 24 of the note by the Secretary-General (A/47/753) would not undermine the sound financial management of the Organization. With regard to the budgetary process, his delegation could accept the proposals put forward in paragraph 26, on the understanding that normal budgetary procedures would be followed in compliance with the provisions of resolution 41/213, particularly with regard to the need to adopt the budget outline during the current session. On the question of the submission of the next programme budget, perhaps it would be possible to hold two 2-week sessions of CPC during 1993.

25. Mr. CARDOSO (Brazil) associated himself with the comments made by the representatives of Cameroon, Colombia and India, and with the suggestion made by the representative of the Netherlands regarding the possibility of holding two sessions of CPC in 1993. His delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's initiatives, which were intended to help the United Nations to play a more effective part in dealing with the problems facing the international community. Those initiatives were particularly timely at the present stage, when the United Nations was in the process of reviewing both its agenda for peace and its agenda for development.

26. Mr. FONTAINE (Cuba) said that his delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's initiatives with regard to the restructuring of the Organization, particularly in the economic and social fields, which were an indication that he intended to give those areas the priority they deserved. His delegation welcomed the dynamism which the process of change in the United Nations and the Secretariat had assumed, but felt there was a need to maintain an overall perspective on the reform process. It therefore considered that, at the current stage, the General Assembly should take note of all the Secretary-General's proposals and request him to provide it with a comprehensive overview of his plans for reform. It was important, also, that the Secretary-General's proposals should not prejudge the decisions and arrangements currently under discussion in other bodies, especially the Second Committee and the plenary Assembly.

27. It seemed to his delegation that there was a lack of precision in some of the references made to the Secretary-General's prerogatives in his note (A/47/753), for example, in paragraphs 6 and 14. The General Assembly had a clear role to play with regard to any decisions relating to the structure of the Secretariat and the allocation of posts within it; it would therefore be more appropriate to refer to recommendations by the Secretary-General, rather than decisions. His delegation would regard such recommendations as proposals, and would hope that the expert bodies would examine and report on them, as well as on the proposals contained in the revised estimates.

28. Mr. SASTRAWAN (Indonesia) said that his delegation shared the views expressed by the representatives of Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, India and Uganda, and would like further clarification of the last part of paragraph 14 of the note by the Secretary-General.

29. Mr. AL MAQTARI (Yemen) agreed with the comments made by the representatives of Brazil, Cameroon, India and Uganda. In view of the fact that many areas of the Secretariat had already been restructured, he wondered why the opinions of Member States were being sought at the present stage rather than earlier. In connection with paragraph 3 of the report, he asked for more information regarding the advice given to the Secretary-General by the Panel of independent advisers referred to therein. He expressed the hope that the Assistant Secretary-General to be appointed Secretary-General of the Fourth World Conference on Women (para. 22) would be a representative of a developing country. He would also like clarification with regard to the reference made in paragraph 13 to close cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions, and as to whether Member States would be represented on the high-level advisory board referred to in paragraph 9 and whether due regard would be given to the principle of equitable geographical distribution in the appointment of its members.

30. Mr. TANG Guang Ting (China) said that he shared the concerns raised by the representatives of Colombia, India and Uganda with regard to the note by the Secretary-General (A/47/753). The affairs of the United Nations community should be dealt with collectively by all, especially matters relating to such important questions as restructuring, and should be settled on the basis of

(Mr. Tang Guang Ting, China)

democratic consultation with Member States. His delegation accordingly welcomed the dialogue on restructuring that had been initiated by the Secretary-General, and hoped that it could be continued.

31. Mr. DANKWA (Ghana) said that his delegation appreciated the initiative taken by the Secretary-General, which was intended to involve the entire international community in a common effort to enhance the effectiveness of the Organization.

32. His delegation took it for granted that no final decisions could be taken on the Secretary-General's proposals until CPC and ACABQ had had an opportunity to express their views. It hoped, however, that the General Assembly would be able to take some decisions before the end of the current year so that the Organization would be able to function in 1993.

33. With regard to some of the specific matters referred to in the report, he said he shared the views of the Cuban representative concerning paragraph 14, and would like further clarification, in connection with paragraph 16, as to what activities were likely to be redeployed to the new Headquarters Departments. Paragraph 23 also seemed to require clarification, as it was difficult to understand how departmental fragmentation could be overcome by reducing personnel without integrating the units involved. The Department of Administration and Management was a very large one, and, if it were managed by a single Under-Secretary-General, the enhanced efficiency desired by all might not be achieved. It would be useful, in that connection, to have a clearer indication from the Secretary-General of the final shape of the Department, as he envisaged it.

34. Mr. LADJOUZI (Algeria) said that he shared the views expressed by the representatives of Brazil, Cameroon, China, Ghana and Uganda. He regarded the note by the Secretary-General (A/47/753) as an illustration of the cooperation between the Secretariat and the General Assembly and a confirmation of the balance between the roles they should play with regard to the restructuring of the Organization.

35. His delegation had already expressed some concern regarding paragraph 14 of the report, and hoped the Secretary-General would be able to provide the Committee further clarification and take into account the concerns expressed by Member States. He intended to raise some further questions with regard to the report in the course of the informal discussions.

36. His delegation considered that the General Assembly should take note of the Secretary-General's proposals, request ACABQ and CPC to consider them in 1993 and ask the Secretary-General to submit an overview of his restructuring plans to the General Assembly at its next session, so that they could work together more effectively on the important task of restructuring.

37. Mr. DUHALT (Mexico) said that further information was required on the linkage between the current medium-term plan, one of the priorities of which

(Mr. Duhalt, Mexico)

was the promotion of the economic development of developing countries, and the provisions of paragraph 14 of the note by the Secretary-General (A/47/753) concerning technical cooperation with developing countries by the proposed Department for Development Support and Management Services.

38. With reference to the next phase of the Secretariat reform, mentioned in paragraph 19, his delegation wished to know the Secretary-General's specific proposals in the important areas of decentralization, the strengthening of the Organization's regional presence and the promotion of a unified United Nations presence at the country level, as well as the programme implications of those proposals, so that Member States could participate fully in their implementation.

39. Mexico shared the concerns expressed by Ghana about the proposed elimination of posts at the Assistant Secretary-General level referred to in paragraph 23. He sought clarification regarding the definition of responsibilities and the final structure of the units within the Department of Administration and Management and stressed the need to keep the matter under consideration, inter alia, in informal consultations.

40. Mr. TEIRLINCK (Belgium) said that his delegation supported the view of the United Kingdom regarding the revised estimates for 1993 and the need to keep expenditure within the limits already approved.

41. With reference to paragraph 14, he drew attention to a discrepancy in the French text, which referred to countries, rather than economies, in transition.

42. Mrs. EMERSON (Portugal) said that her delegation shared the views expressed by the representative of the Netherlands. It believed that the restructuring of the United Nations was fully justified and favoured the stage-by-stage approach which had been adopted. Referring to the question that had been raised as to why the Secretary-General informed the General Assembly of his decisions only after they had been taken, she said that, in essence, the Secretary-General was seeking a vote of confidence and that Portugal, for its part, was happy to give him that vote.

43. The CHAIRMAN said that the technical issues raised by delegations would be more appropriately addressed in the Committee's informal consultations, but that the Under-Secretary-General and the Acting Controller would respond on general points of principle.

44. Mr. THORNBURGH (Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management) said that the process of reform and restructuring was both difficult and dynamic and by its very nature, untidy and that the forebearance of delegations was therefore essential if it was to succeed. The stage-by-stage approach adopted by the Secretary-General had the added effect that actions undertaken at previous stages might be altered by those undertaken subsequently.

(Mr. Thornburgh)

45. In response to the question raised by Cameroon concerning the coordination of the activities of the three new Departments and the reallocation of current activities, he said that the Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference for Trade and Development (UNCTAD) was overseeing that process and holding regular meetings with the three new Under-Secretaries-General.

46. A number of delegations had raised questions about the provisions of paragraph 14, which would require further discussion in the informal consultations. He pointed out, however, that the new Department for Development Support and Management Services would have executive authority in selected areas only, in which it already had a comparative advantage over the agencies mentioned by the representative of Colombia. With reference to the last sentence of that paragraph, he assured delegations that there was no intention to pre-empt the priorities already established by the General Assembly.

47. With regard to the redeployment exercise, he said that posts were being examined on an individual basis, to determine their continued relevance. Thus far, 74 redundant posts in the Secretariat had been redeployed to other priority areas. The objective was not to identify a group of posts in the administrative area for wholesale redeployment to the substantive area, but to identify redundant posts, both at Headquarters and in the various United Nations entities, which could be redeployed to other areas. The overall aim was to concentrate maximum resources in substantive areas in the field, where they would have a direct impact on the implementation of programmes. Those measures would, furthermore, be carried out without prejudice to the functions already assigned to the Department of Administration and Management.

48. Responding to the question raised by India and other delegations with regard to paragraph 23, concerning the elimination of four posts at the Assistant Secretary-General level, he recalled the Secretary-General's statement on personnel matters to the Committee at its 21st meeting in which he had expressed his intention of achieving an overall reduction in the number of Under-Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General posts, making a clear differentiation between political and career appointments and studying the possibility of introducing a career-level equivalent to the Assistant Secretary-General level on the political side. While the results of that study were not yet known, it was clear that some posts at the Assistant Secretary-General level in the new Department of Administration and Management, in particular the Office of the Controller, were candidates for the proposed new career-level posts.

49. Finally, he welcomed the observation by the representative of Uganda concerning the restoration of the Assistant Secretary-General post in the Centre for Human Rights and noted that the allocation of 17 much-needed additional posts to the Centre was a good example of constructive redeployment.

50. Mr. BAUDOT (Acting Controller), responding to questions of a budgetary nature relating to the note by the Secretary-General on restructuring (A/47/753), said that it was essential for the General Assembly to adopt a revised budget for the biennium 1992-1993. On the basis of a revised appropriation, Member States would be assessed for 1993. The decisions that the General Assembly might wish to take on the revised estimates currently under consideration and on additional revised estimates to be presented early next year should not and would not change that basic requirement. With regard to paragraph 27 of the note, although the words "at the maintenance level" might be misleading, the intention of the Secretariat was to propose to the General Assembly through statements of programme budget implications the additional resources required during the first part of 1993 to implement the mandated activities, on the understanding that the additional revised estimates to be considered early next year might modify such requirements in the light of changes in the organizational structure of the Secretariat. Statements of programme budget implications at the "maintenance level" would in any case be treated in accordance with the normal procedures, including the use of the contingency fund.

51. He stressed that one of the fundamental reasons for the proposal to submit additional revised estimates early next year was the need to preserve and enhance the necessary dialogue between two of the major organs of the Charter. Also, the involvement of Member States in a budgetary process which should remain orderly was one of the main requirements of resolution 41/213. Such involvement meant, in addition, that the documents presented by the Secretariat should be fully transparent.

52. The additional, or final, revised estimates to be presented in early 1993 would not modify the overall level of the revised budget for the biennium 1992-1993 as it would be appropriated by the General Assembly in a few days. The additional revised estimates would, within that overall level of resources, propose a different distribution among sections and would also indicate a different distribution of responsibilities within a modified Secretariat structure.

53. On the question of the number and distribution of high-level posts, which would be further discussed in informal consultations, he reiterated that the intention of the Secretary-General, as indicated in his note, was to streamline the upper echelon of the Secretariat. The proposal to postpone a decision on the reduction of such posts proposed in the revised estimates currently before the Assembly had been made in order to facilitate the process of implementing the decisions of the Secretary-General indicated in the note. The final number and distribution of high-level posts for the biennium 1992-1993 would be reflected in the new revised estimates to be presented to the Assembly at the beginning of next year. In general, the debate on the issue which had taken place in the Fifth Committee had shown that "balance" and "dialogue" were key elements of a successful implementation of the restructuring of the Secretariat.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.